

Appl. No. 09/842,472
Amdt. dated January 6, 2004
Reply to Office Action of 7/8/03

REMARKS

Claim 1 has been amended. Claims 1-8 remain pending. Reconsideration and reexamination of the application, as amended, are requested.

The Examiner rejected claims 1-8 under 35 USC §103(a) as being obvious on consideration of Furukawa et al.

Furukawa is directed to a production control system for dealing with producing many kinds of products in small quantities within a short deliver period by improving productivity of production lines and un-manned operation of the lines. The production control system has a plurality of facilities for processing products, cell controllers for controlling the facilities, a line control system for centrally controlling all the cell controllers, and a transporting unit controlled by the line control system to transport products between facilities. The disclosure of Furukawa is directed to a "control system" which has an entirely different objective from a "management" system which is the apparatus of applicant's invention. In any case, the line control system of Furukawa has a number of functions which includes a function of preparing schedules. In this function of preparing schedules, the line control system uses a job processing time simulation method. As indicated at column 17, lines 38-51:

This method prepares a table for managing free time of each process, a table for storing the history of jobs processed thru the processes, and a region for managing a latest address of the history table. A job to be processed has information of routes and man-hours for each process. Also, a table is arranged for storing a transporting time between processes. For each job, a start time, and end time, and a deliver time to the next process which is obtained by reclusively simulating the next process, are simulated for each process and stored at a latest address of the history table. These are repeated to correctly carry out the simulation of a process in question with processes before and after the process in question being taken into consideration.

Such disclosure is not directed to and does not point in any obvious way to the structure of the system of Claim 1 which includes:

...

a walkman-hour conversion table

a work constituent conversion table...

a standardized man-hour table....

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a main man-hour management table....

a process name table...; and

man-hour output means...

There are clear and complete differences in the elements and the architecture between what is disclosed by Furukawa and what is claimed in Claim 1. Although Furukawa discloses a "control" system and Claim 1 claims a "management" system, and there are clear differences in the structure and architecture, applicant further points out that Claim 1 requires the "means" element, as follows:

man-hour output means including a man-hour output system program, a timing graph output program, a process balancing table output table, a net & loss aggregation table output program, an individual process specification aggregation table output program, a history management table output program, and a main man-hour management output program, for outputting man-hour information by being assigned data from said main man-hour management table and said process name table.

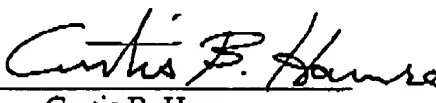
Applicant states that this "means" element is a "means" element in accordance with 35 USC §112, paragraph 6. The means element of Claim 1 is not so broad as to encompass an output system of a control system like that of Furukawa which the Examiner intimates is disclosed at column 11, lines 60-62 of Furukawa. For all these reasons, Claim 1 and the claims which depend from it do not follow from Furukawa.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and reexamination are requested. Allowance of Claims 1-8 at an early date is solicited.

Respectfully Submitted,

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